Soccer Today!

Produced weekly by Royal Publishing

SPECIAL EDITION:
NSL Round 18
Match Program
Northern Spirit
v Brisbane

Meet Rebecca, our latest Sharkette profile

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Feature:
Kostya
Tszyu: a
soccer fan
from way
back
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No. 4

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Kostya Tszyu: more than a passing interest in soccer

NOT many people know it but Australia's Russian-born boxing legend Kostya Tszyu enjoys the round ball game. His father played as a professional in Russia. He uses the game as part of his training regimen and his son plays Under 7s for the Sans Souci club. Needless to say, most weekends he's just like any other parent pacing up and down suburban touchlines, encouraging his son and his team to victory. Tszyu was last week a special guest at the Olympic Sharks versus Northern Spirit National League derby at Toyota Park. He officially kicked the game off and in a special halftime presentation, the champ received his very own Sharks jersey. SOCCER TODAY publisher Derek Royal caught up with the man currently considered the greatest boxer in the world.

SINCE arriving in Sydney from their Soviet Union homeland several years ago, Tszyu and his wife Natasha have always lived in the southern suburbs, just a stone's throw from Toyota Park.

And with a Sharks shirt and a blue and white Sharks scarf slung around his neck, he certainly looked the part of the local boy geared up to cheer on his team, rather than a lethal weapon who last year destroyed American Zab Judah in a second round Las Vegas bashing.

Tsyzu's IBF Super Lightweight victory over the brash New Yorker gave him all three belts in his weight division, making him the best-credentialed pugilist on the planet.

But with serious boxing business behind him, it's back to working with his charges at his academy at Rockdale and of course, to watching his young fella kick a ball on the weekends.

"I have followed soccer all my life," Tsyzu told Soccer Today.

"My father played as a professional in our small town, most Russian towns have professional teams: even the small ones.

"And I followed the big Moscow club Dinamo.

"They were my favourite team."

When asked who his favourite player was, Tsyzu had no hesitation in his reply: "the late Yev Yashin, the greatest goalkeeper of the century."

Tsyzu plays the odd game of indoor soccer and he uses the round ball game as a part of his training routine.

Looking at him face-to-face, he certainly doesn't look like he packs one of the most powerful punches in the world.

Nor does he look too intimidating.

In fact, Tsyzu comes across as far removed from the world of the professional pugilist as one could imagine.

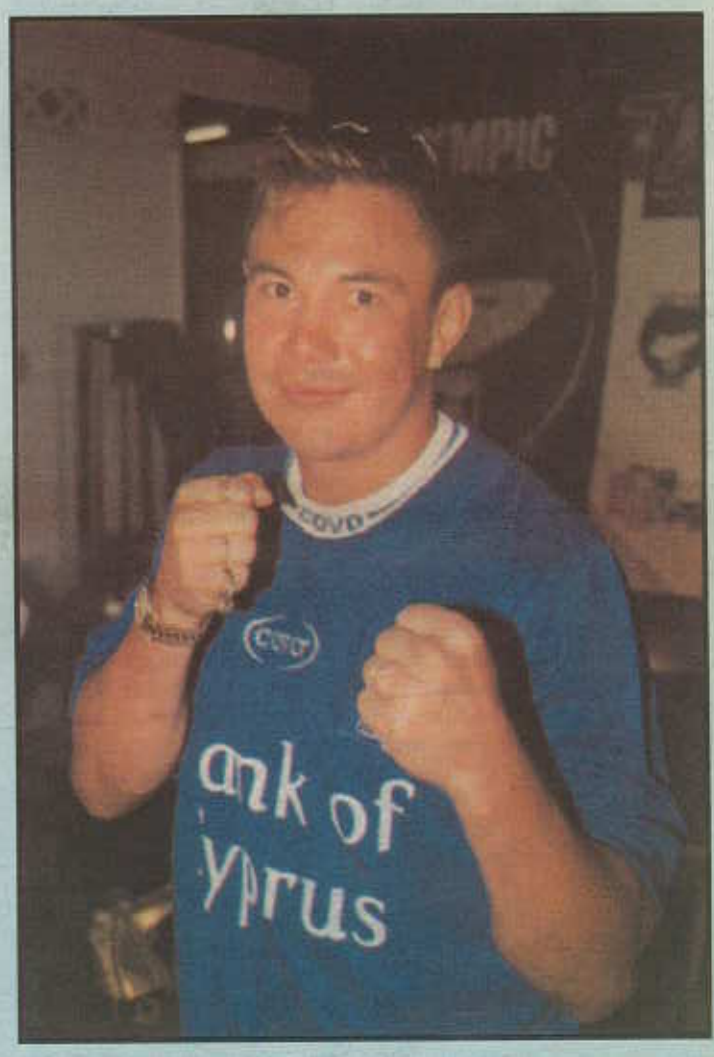
He is softly spoken and even with his Russian accent, he communicates well.

But behind the quiet, unassuming exterior there lies a steely professional quite capable of delivering a lethal blow in a split second.

Tszyu personifies the typical baby-faced assassin.

Underrated by the American boxing public and mocked by his 24-year-old opponent Judah, Tsyzu last year took the IBF Super Lightweight crown as a 3-1 outsider.

When asked why he hadn't received the respect he deserved from Americans, he replied that because Australia



was so far away from the USA, Americans didn't get to see him fight.

"This (Las Vegas) is a good place for me to come back and get another world title. I want to put them all in one collection."

Which, to the shock of Americans and the delight of Australians, is exactly what he has done.

But for now, Tsyzu is quite content to watch his son play every Winter weekend and to follow a game he holds close to his heart.

"I believe my son's team only lost two games last year," he boasts.

"I watch them every weekend, it's good, soccer is a great sport and it teaches you good balance.

"Soccer is something new for this country and it's getting popular and popular."

It sure is, but then again Kostya Tsyzu is getting even more popular too.

Looks like the game's influence has been a good one for the undisputed world champ.

Milicic looking forward to good times at Olympic

A FEW months ago ace striker Ante Milicic was seen as the Messiah at Sydney United.
Now he is considered the final piece in the Olympic Sharks' jigsaw puzzle.
A few months ago he was the man United hoped would bring fortune and success to a desperate club that had fallen on hard times.
Now, he is the man who has strengthened the Sharks' odds of winning the championship.
SOCCER TODAY publisher Derek Royal caught up with Milicic after he'd scored a goal and set up another in a memorable debut performance in the Sharks' 3-0 annihilation of Northern Spirit.

Milicic returned to United from a four-year European stint that included stops at Dutch club NAC Breda and Croatia's Rijeka.

His return offered United renewed hope and inspiration.

Milicic certainly kept his side of the bargain, scoring eight goals and creating opportunities for those around him. A remarkable feat considering the struggles United has experienced this season.

However, Milicic watched in dismay as United teammates Zlatko Arambasic and Kresimir Marusic were offloaded to Parramatta Power and Melbourne Knights respectively.

He also watched United's season resemble a runaway roller coaster: penetrating the heights of the stratosphere one week and caressing the earth at a high velocity of knots the next.

But now, Milicic has been sold by the club that nurtured and developed him.

According to the Sydney United Board, the money received for his sale, believed to be around $110,000, is enough for the club to maintain its place in the National League. For the time being anyway.

After starring for the Sharks in Sunday night's 3-0 annihilation of Northern Spirit, Milicic revealed that while the deal had been in the pipeline for at least a week, it materialised so quickly that he had next to no time to even consider the impact of his actions.

"Thursday at four o'clock I signed my contract and at five o'clock I had my first training session with the boys," Milicic told Soccer Today.

Then three days later he was wearing the famous blue strip in front of more than 6,000 fans at the Sharks' Toyota Stadium home.

Milicic enjoyed a dream debut. He scored his team's first goal and produced the final pass for their second, by midfielder Tommy Pondeljak.

In the aftermath of victory, Milicic bathed in the glory of well wishers, most of whom had turned up to Shark Park hoping to witness exactly what had transpired.

"To tell you the truth it all happened very quickly but when a club like Olympic comes in for you and they've got their eye on a championship then it's a move that must be seriously considered," he said.

"I was quite happy to make the move cross town and after tonight's game I can see that we're on course for a successful season."

Milicic added that he was encouraged by the energy, youth and enthusiasm of his new teammates.

"They're just so young and they're so fast and they just love to get forward," he said.

"And as a striker I'm enjoying every minute of that.

"I think I slotted in fairly well tonight and I think we can only go forward."

Before making the move, Milicic was warned that it would probably take him at least a couple of weeks to fit in with his new teammates, but so far, there have been no hiccoughs.

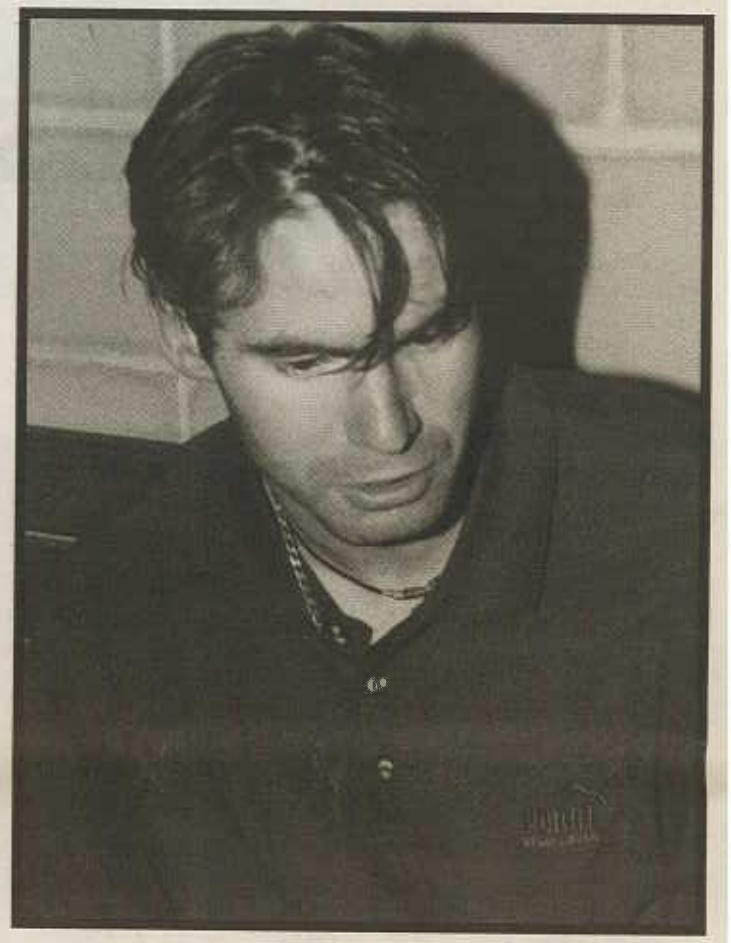
"I know a few of the guys at the club," Milicic said.

"I know Ante Juric. I know "Pondy" (Tommy Pondeljak), Clint Bolton and I played against (coach) Gary Phillips in the 1997 Grand Final, so I'm familiar with the guys.

"And I think that after today's game people will sense that the settling-in period has been a lot less than was first thought.

"I'm very happy and as a striker it's my job to score goals and to set them up, which I did tonight.

"But the main thing for the side is that we won and we can get close to second spot because at this stage that's our aim.



Indeed, while Milicic has been lost to United, the club stated in an official release that they are fully supportive of a man who has given so much to their cause and they wish him a prosperous future.

And while United faces an uphill battle to remain competitive, the Sharks have a few problems of their own: albeit more pleasant ones.

The most pressing issue facing Milicic's new team seems to be where they will finish on the premiership ladder: second or third.

Every man and his dog seems to think that the Sharks will offer outright favourites Perth Glory a real fight to the death.

And now that they've signed Milicic, the odds of the Sharks toppling Perth at the business end of the season have shortened dramatically.

The Sharks like that scenario. So too do their fans. But most of all, the guy who cut short his European career to fulfil a childhood dream of leading his beloved club, likes that scenario, too.

Especially now that he has achieved one dream and is chasing another: a National League title.

SOCCER TODAY - available at all good newsagencies every Thursday

RALE RASIC: legend - writing exclusively for SOCCER TODAY

RALE RASIC remains the only man to have taken Australia to the World Cup Finals. He achieved that in 1974 when his side qualified for the tournament in West Germany. The legacy of that team's success has been something of a poisoned chalice for subsequent Socceroo teams. Rasic's opinion carries weight with followers of the game, especially those who remember with fondness his deeds of 38 years ago. This week, Rale touches on the contentious issue of refereeing, has a dig at journo Mike Cockerill and praises a couple of Sydney United stars and their coach Branko Culina.

REFEREES have and always will be part of the game. They do play an important role and should be respected for the work and effort they give to the game.

During my time as a coach I always made an effort to try and get onside with the referees, this was despite a number of run-ins I had with them.

I could say that during my career as a coach I had more incidents with referees then any of the other coaches in the league at the time put together.

This brings me to the first point that I want to make and involves an incident that has caused much controversy following the draw that was played out between Sydney United and Marconi last Saturday night.

The most important part of a referees job is that he must bring with him consistency, fairness and experience on how the game is played.

I have seen too many teams be unfairly wronged and players careers ruined due to poor refereeing, the time has come to put an end to this.

At the end of the Sydney United- Marconi match the linesman held up that there was four minutes of stoppage time remaining.

Fristly the fact that FIFA ever brought in such a ridiculous rule stating how much time there was remaining still puzzles me.

How they can state how much time is left, when at the end of the day the decision is totally up to the referee is beyond me.

But anyway, the linesman held up the board which indicated that there was four minutes left of play. The referee Con Diomis ended up playing six minutes of stoppage time, and it was in the fifth minute that Marconi scored the equaliser.

He is responsible for what happens on the field, and should be held accountable for this poor piece of refereeing. He should be giving himself a red card.

I was sitting with former international coaches and players and they too couldn't believe what they had just seen.

But it seems that referees can get away with pretty much anything these days, as coaches, clubs and players aren't allowed to criticise them. Why should they be exempt from criticism when the rest of us aren't ?

The general view is that referees are untouchable and that shouldn't be so.

I think that referees need to improve their standards and that can only be achieved if they listen to what the coaches and players have to say.

Another area that has taken away from the game in recent years has been the tackle, which is now more heavily policed then in years past.

FIFA have once again brought in poor rule that has pretty much banned the tackle from behind.

The tackle when done correctly is an art, a skill that is now noticeably missing in many of today's players.

It's a great part of the game and that ruling has turned many players into pussy-cats who are too afraid to tackle due to the fear of being sent-off.

Our game has always been a mans game, and should be played in a gentlemanly conduct, but this rule takes away from one of the greatest skills in the game and gives too much protection to soft players.

I'M PUZZLED that in the last 48 hours Sydney Morning Herald journalist Mike Cockerill hasn't mentioned Ron Smith in any of his articles.

For the past 20 years nobody has mentioned his name and now all of a sudden we have guys like Cockerill commenting about him every week.

Smith and Jim Shoulder were in charge of the under 20s side that went to the World Cup in 1985 they were subsequently fired after a poor tournament that left our country disgraced.

Where is Ron Smith now? He's coaching in Malaysia, a favourite place for Australians to retreat after not being able to make the grade in Australia.

Mike also continually refers to the effectiveness of English coaching schools, but can you name one school that stands out as being so special?

The game in England has become heavily influenced by European imports. You have Sven Goran Erikson looking after the National team and coaches such as Gerard Houlier, Arsene Wenger, Claudio Ranieri, Gianluca Vialli and Ruud Gullit to name but a few who have coached in the Premier League.

These are but some of the people that have come from all over Europe to raise the standard of these English clubs. These people have helped create a footballing revolution.

Players such as Eric Cantona, Ginola, Zola, Henry and Schmeichel are not English yet have dominated the English scene for a sustained period.

Defender Paul Bilokapic in his old Sydney United gear. Rale believes that the former Olyroo has yet to fulfil his potential.

Instead of continually applauding the so called brilliance of English coaching schools why doesn't Michael look at the success of schools across Europe such as those in France, Italy, the Czech Republic, Holland, Yugoslavia. Countries that have helped produce players such as the Baggios and Van Bastens, the likes of which will be remembered forever.

Football is a global game Michael, so it should be reported as such, not just by continually referring to news that relates to your friends.

LAST WEEK I talked about the brilliance of Gabriel Mendez and again this week he proved what an outstanding player he is in his shining performance against Marconi.

With all the injuries he has had, he is a perfect model with which young players should base themselves on.

His passion for the game is simply beyond belief.

In that same match Paul Bilokapic was another who stood out as being a player with so much talent and having so much going for him, yet his talent has never been fully realised.

One wonders why he has never achieved, but there is no doubting that he has plenty of ability and it's a shame that his potential hasn't been met with more acclaim.

It must also be noted that coach of Sydney United Branko Culina despite the amount of flak he has received has done a good job with United and whatever results the club achieves you cannot deny the attractive style that Branko has brought into the club.

Finally I'd like to sign off by letting those people out there know that if they respond to my comments please feel free to write into the editor explaining your views rather then ringing me personally or leaving abusive messages.

SHORT PASSES

Murphy wants permanent move to Palace

Australian defender Shaun Murphy wants to turn his loan move to Crystal Palace into a permanent transfer.
Murphy is on a month's loan from Sheffield United and Palace manager Trevor Francis can't believe his luck in picking up such a quality player.
He said: "He's a player who meets the standards required for this league and I thought he gave an assured performance.
"I don't know the reasons why he's out of the team but I was very pleased when Neil Warnock allowed me to have him for a month's loan."
Murphy added, "It's a club with ambition and I'd like to be a part of that for sure."

Emerton on target and Newcastle remain interested

AUSTRALIA international Brett Emerton scored two goals and earned a penalty as Feyenoord thrashed Roda JC Kerkrade 5-0 ina Dutch first division soccer match today.
Pierre van Hooijdonk also scored two goals.
Feyenoord decided the match after four minutes when Emerton hit the back of the net in the opening minute and Van Hooijdonk scored from the penalty spot after Emerton was brought down in the box.
Danish striker Jon Dahl Tomasson was also on target as Feyenoord moved to third place with 39 points and with a game in hand over Ajax Amsterdam.
Meanwhile, the *Evening Chronicle* newspaper reports that the Aussie ace remains the No. 1 target for Premier League giants Newcastle United.
United last week signed Jermaine Jenas from Nottingham Forest for £5 million, but former England manager and current United boss Bobby Robson's said he was determined to land Emerton.

Moore strikes again

AUSTRALIA international Craig Moore grabbed a dramatic winner for Rangers in last weekend's 2-1 defeat of Dundee at Dens Park. Dundee hit the front on 71 minutes but Shota Arveladze popped up to equalize three minutes later. Two minutes on Moore angled a header home for the winner.

Kewell adamant he's ready to head to the continent

HARRY KEWELL has reaffirmed his intention to move to Europe after a miserable week in which Leeds United slumped to another defeat and his house was burgled.

Kewell returned to the Leeds starting lineup on Sunday after sitting on the bench in the club's two previous matches following a five-week absence with back problems. But Leeds were hammered 4-0 by Liverpool at Elland Road and Kewell was booked for kicking off a boot after being tackled heavily.

The defeat compounded Kewell's unease at Leeds' inability to convert potential into performance as the Yorkshire side dropped nine points behind English Premier League leaders Manchester United.

"I've always wanted to try another league, to go into Europe and prove myself all over again," Socceroo Kewell said. "Italy or Spain, I'm not bothered. It could be both.

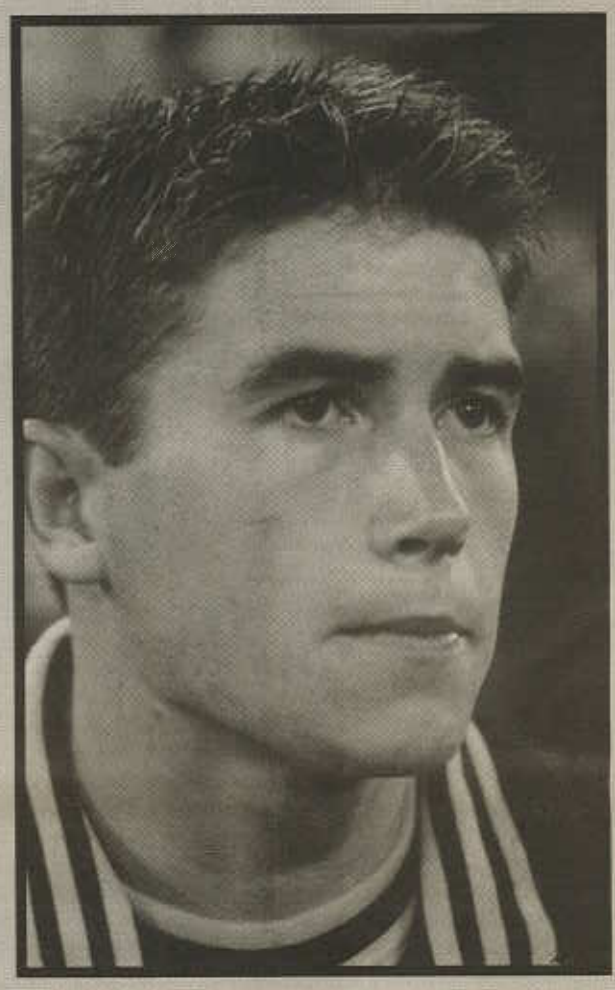
"I've always said I'll go at some stage and I stick by that. It's definitely my intention.

"The Premier League is probably the most exciting, and therefore the best league for fans, but Italy is better football technically. If you can play there, you can play anywhere."

Adding to Kewell's worries, he had his house burgled as he was dining in London with his soapie actor partner Sheree Murphy. Thieves broke in while the couple's eight-month-old son, Taylor, was being baby-sat, and stole jewellery.

But Kewell's primary frustration is with Leeds' notorious inconsistency. "We've been threatening to do it for two or three seasons now," he said.

"And we don't want to be remembered as the team that were always in contention, but never quite got there."



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Only in Soccer Today

Schwarzer on the comeback trail

By Brent Read

AUSTRALIA goalkeeper Mark Schwarzer has taken the first step toward reclaiming his starting spot at Middlesbrough with a clean sheet for the club's reserves side.

Schwarzer last week made his return between the sticks for North Riding in the Senior Cup against York City after two months on the sidelines following a hernia operation.

The 29-year-old was a virtual spectator as North Riding cruised to a comfortable 5-0 win, and admitted afterwards he was still one to two weeks off his best form.

"It was good to get out and have a run," Schwarzer said on the club's website, www.mfc.co.uk.

"It's been over two months since I last played a game and it was a nice feeling to get back on the pitch again.

"I'm still feeling a bit stiff and a bit sore, but things should be a lot better over the next week or two."

Schwarzer faces an uphill battle to regain his starting spot at 'Boro, with his replacement Mark Crossley filling in admirably in his absence.

The Australian custodian last played for the Premier League side on November 3 in the club's 5-1 win over Derby at the Riverside.

He went into camp with the Australian side after that victory and subsequently suffered a groin injury as the Socceroos missed World Cup qualification with a two-leg loss to Uruguay.

While in camp with the Socceroos, statistics alarmingly revealed Schwarzer was the worst performed keeper in the Premier League.

Crossley also comfortably acquitted himself to life in the Premier League, keeping three clean sheets while Schwarzer was absent.

The Australian admitted his stint on the sideline had been frustrating but said he was now concentrating on returning to full fitness.

"I felt that before I left for Australia I had been playing quite well and back in Australia I thought I played quite well as well," Schwarzer said.

"So to get injured when you feel you are doing well is frustrating and to be out for such a long period of time is also very frustrating.

"It is always a difficult part in anyone's career when they are injured, but you just have to get on with it.

"It's part and parcel of football, you just have to build your way up to the day when you are fit again.

"The operation was one which always needed to be done, it was whether it was done straight away or whether I could have waited which was the question.

"But it wasn't one which I could leave until the summer, it needed to be done straight away.

"Last night was a step in the right direction."

South release keeper Jones

South Melbourne has released goalkeeper Chris Jones from his contract. The star of the club's World Club Championship campaign two years ago, Jones was one of South's highest paid players after he re-signed following serious interest from a top-flight Spanish club. He is likely to join a Victorian Premier League club for the upcoming winter season before targeting another move to the National League.

Clubs chase Knights Sir Joel

Northern Spirit, Parramatta Power and Newcastle United are all reportedly chasing Melbourne Knights attacker Joel Porter. The Olympic Sharks have also been linked with the South Australian, who is now one of the League's most exciting young players. Porter has dazzled the League with his powerful surges and ability as a target man. The 23-year-old has so far scored seven goals this season.

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THE WORLD OF WOMEN'S SOCCER

with Matildas star Anissa Tann-Darby

Anissa Tann-Darby has played more international matches for Australia than any other player in women's soccer history. Anissa writes a weekly column for SOCCER TODAY, offering readers a special insight into the women's game. This week: Anissa writes about resuming duties with the NSW Sapphires.

THE NATIONAL Summer League resumed on Saturday with a full round of fixtures played throughout the country.

The same pattern unfolded over the weekend, as had been the case before Christmas with the three leading teams maintaining their positions at the top of the table.

The League has now become a three horse race and with only three rounds remaining it will be hard to see the bottom teams catch those at the top.

The weekend kicked off with our fixture on Saturday at Valentine Sports Park against Adelaide Sensation. A less than perfect week of preparation and also knowing that we had lost Taryn Rockall with a knee injury for the rest of the season was enough to rattle the team prior to the game.

Taryn was unfortunate enough to sustain a knee injury early in the week, she now needs a knee reconstruction and our most consistent player for the season so far will be sorely missed.

NSW started the game nervously, which isn't usually a trait of our team.

Coach Allan Bourke used a number of new young players in the team in a bid to help their progress into the Young Matilda squad.

This may have been the reason for our shaky start and with a goal scored against us as early as the 12th minute we knew that things wouldn't be easy.

However, the players continued to follow the game plan devised by Allan and after 34 minutes we were able to get on the score sheet through the in-form Kelly Golebiowski.

Kelly is on fire at the moment and her talent is a delight to watch.

At half time it was 2-1 and after the break we were able to dominate the game. Adelaide sensation striker Lisa de Vanna was a continual threat to our team with her explosive pace.

Changes were made at half time to strengthen our defense, Lisa Warrener replaced Catherine Collins and after Thea Slatyer was injured Lisa Gilbert also returned to the team to take her place as right back once again.

With these changes we were much more dominant and more composed at the back, which enabled the team to forge ahead.

We were able to score four more goals and I think the 6-1 score line was more of a true reflection of the game.

The Canberra Eclipse were also able to secure a win over the weekend and they remain in second place only 3 points behind us.

They were able to beat Victoria Vision 2-0. Young Matildas striker Caitlin Munoz was able to score two goals and therefore keep the ACT team close on our heels.

NSW plays Canberra in two weeks and I think that particular game will determine the eventual grand finalists.

Canberra were not able to score in the first half and made hard work of there eventual victory.

It seems a number of teams were struggling to regain the form they had prior to the Christmas break, all reports reveal that most teams seemed to have a slow start in the first half but were able to perform much better in the second half.

Having a break in the season for the inclusion of the Matildas' Australia Cup campaign must disrupt teams' overall preparation and cause a few coaching headaches.

Players returning from national team duty whether for the senior team or the young Matildas must find it hard to have to train the whole season through.

Coaches would also be hoping that they do not receive any injuries to their key players for the recommencement of the league.

As was with our team the loss of Taryn Rockall was a major blow to our team as she is the lynchpin in our midfield and one of our best players.

Queensland Sting were also able to remain in third place with a tidy 4-0 win over the Northern NSW Pride team. Queensland still remain 2 points behind the Canberra Eclipse and hope to once again be National League Champions.

Strikers April Mann, Natalie Thomas and Alicia Ferguson, all current Matildas were able to get on the score board and would have caused endless problems for bottom of the table Northern NSW.

NNSW have a very young squad once again this year and hopefully they will be able to build on this years performance and be a team to beat in the future.

Anissa Tann-Darby on duty for the Matildas

Coach Mark Jones has done a great job with his team over the years and the number of players that he has in the Young Matildas is a reflection of his work and dedication with the young players in the Newcastle and surrounding areas over the years.

Next weeks round of games should provide all coaches with a clearer indication of who will be this years finalists.

With Queensland Sting playing the Canberra Eclipse a win to Queensland would see them jump into second and a loss would make it extremely hard for Queensland to make the Final.

NSW travels to Victoria and although we had a good 10-0 win in round three we are not a good traveling team and therefore will have to be on out toes if we wish to emulate this result.

Sun, surf and soccer: Umina Eagles doing a grand job developing the grass roots game

Sydney-based clubs and associations are always talking about fostering the game at the grass roots level, but soccer is not restricted to the nation's largest metropolis. Umina Eagles, based on the beautiful NSW Central Coast is one such club and as SOCCER TODAY's Adam Leto discovered, they're doing a grand job of developing the game in their region.

A TRIP to the Central Coast is for most opposing teams a venture that starts out full of promise and expectation.

Most players see it as an opportunity to take in some new scenery, catch up on a bit of sun or even have a surf in their abundance of beaches.

It's easy to forget that these players are actually going there for a game of soccer, not to have some fun in the sun so already the hosts have got that in their favour.

There is always talk about how important grass-roots football is, and the majority of that talk comes from Sydney-based associations.

It is just assumed that Sydney is the be all and end all of soccer in this country.

But there are just as many regional associations that play a big role in developing the game at a junior level.

Umina Eagles are one such club that has played a hand in not only promoting and developing the code in the district but at the same time have unearthed some fine young talent.

Jamie McMaster was a local junior who is now playing in the English Premier League with Leeds United.

Glen Sprod is another local product who played for Exeter City in England before returning to Australia to play in the NSL for Newcastle United and is now playing for Parramatta Eagles in the Premier League.

Current first grader Andrew French is also a former Australian schoolboy player.

These guys are all proof that the production line at the club is in fine order. Players from clubs on the central coast always seem to be different to those raised in the Sydney metropolitan area.

Usually they're a lot more down to earth, are respectful as well as being totally competitive. They don't give up, but not only do they play the game at a break-neck speed more importantly they play the game in the manner with which it was intended.

Umina United ws established in October 1979 from a merger between Umina and Blackwall soccer clubs.

They first participated in the Central Coast Association competition in 1980 and unfortunately didn't win a single trophy.

Twenty two years later and the club has certainly progressed, capturing seven first grade premierships, six reserve grade premierships, nine third grade premierships, including seven in a row, eleven senior club championships and five junior club championships.

Not bad for a relatively new-formed club. But the achievements don't end there as the ambitious Eagles continue their progress in 2002.

Priding themselves on a professional approach, the Umina Eagles continue to push the game at an amateur level to new boundaries. At the same time however, President Barry Cole realises the need to keep enjoyment and a positive vibe around the club.

"This year many social activities have been planned and home games will be filled with activities for all in attendance, including women and children," he says.

Looking at clubs like the Umina Eagles it's fair to say that the game is maintaining it's health in regional areas outside of Sydney. Not only is it alive on the pitch but judging by the enthusiasm of the people involved in amateur clubs such as these, their passion for the game is clear to even the biggest outsider.

The Central Coast continues to surprise, it's not all sun and surf you know.

SOCCER TODAY - available every Thursday at all good newsagencies

CONTINUING OUR BEST READ WEEKLY SERIES ON

SOCCER SKILLS

Training: the next level

By Jimmy Fraser
former Australia World Cup goalkeeper

MAINTAINING an interest in training week in and week out over a season is an ongoing problem for coaches as we strive to improve the all-round performance of the players we are working with.

At the entry level of development coaching when everything is new to the young keeper and we combine the teaching of basic techniques in short sessions with fun competitive games maintaining an interest is not a problem.

As we move to the next level and the routines and techniques become more familiar there is a lot of repetition. Coaches then have to be give some thought to changing the training structure to keep players giving maximum input throughout the sessions and not get bored with the same routines. Boredom in training can also affect form as bored players often go into form slumps that of course affect the team's performance.

At this stage we have only moved up one level in our development but it is possibly the most important as this is the formative stage where players are the most receptive to training and new ideas and where coaches can develop the work ethic that will stand by the player throughout their career.

This stage gives the coach many varied areas to work in as we are introducing the young developing player to not only the techniques such as diving and handling but physical, tactical and some psychological input.

There is never enough time in training at this stage of training as players can be introduced to training drills, game related routines, training aids and the theory of goalkeeping.

As the players progress to the next level we must consolidate what we have learnt and improve the players ability by increasing speed of delivery the number of balls used in and exercise or the power of delivery.

The coaching of game awareness at this level allows coaches more scope to introduce new routines into practice to maintain the keepers interest.

As well as maintaining the players interest it also keeps the coach motivated as we work on new routines that will motivate the keepers to work harder to improve their game.

In our elite group that where the youngest player is seventeen and the players are all preparing to trial overseas we work four sessions a week with the emphasize on developing speed and power and our tactical knowledge while improving technique and putting all this into practices into game related situations.

The work ethic developed

in the group and the encouragement they give each other has developed a bond amongst the players and improved the

standard of all the players. Their next step up will be to trial successfully overseas or secure a contract with a National League club.

As we progress through the levels we will always work on the basic techniques but usually for less time and with less instruction and fault correcting unless the keeper has a problem in a specific area.

At the Olympic Sharks for instance where we have Clint Bolton as our number one keeper our routines revolve around keeping Clint's timing and footwork so he handles the ball with confidence at all times.

We spend some time in every session working on crosses to maintain his timing in coming for high balls under pressure. This ability he has to come off his line and dominate the area is a huge advantage to the team as it gives us so many tactical options as we have a young fast team who can play out from the back so quickly.

Clint has a set routine and is very fastidious about stretching and maintaining his flexibility so much of the opening part of every session is spent on stretching.

This not only maintains the flexibility but also prevents injuries and will prolong his playing career as he maintains his body at peak fitness for maximum performance in training and playing. While we still cover all aspects of training at this level and we will work on specific areas where needed much of the training revolves around game related practices with the team. Small games where the keeper is constantly organizing the defense, making decisions on distribution and constant shot stopping combined with gym sessions and recovery sessions after the match make up our program.

The season program is planned so that the heavy workload is completed early in the season this allows the keepers to contend with the heavy number of sessions and games throughout the year while limiting the niggling injuries that most keepers have to carry throughout the year.

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League's big boys seeking their own Glory

By Adam Leto

REMEMBER that kid at school who used to always sit at the front of the class. In all the tests he used to come first, and was pretty much just flawless.

Well in the NSL class for the past three years the Perth Glory have been that boy who sits at the front.

They are the darlings of the league, not just for their ability to win matches but for the way they have promoted the game, the crowds they have pulled to their home matches and basically their "goodie goodie" image.

You don't here about any financial crisis, or player management altercations everything they touch seems to turn to gold.

But it hasn't happened overnight for the Glory, but more just a simple plan of the right recruitment, combined with clever marketing. Not to mention a team that scores goals as well.

One of the players that was targeted by the Glory when they set about building a team was former Marconi Captain Brad Maloney.

Maloney was the pin-up boy and inspirational leader of the Stallions at the time and it was said that the Glory offered Maloney a $500,000 contract to lure him across to the opposite side of the country.

In his first season with the Glory the man they call "Bugsy" didn't quite live up to his reputation, largely due to the amount of time he spent on the sidelines through injury.

But this season he has cemented his spot in the midfield, and has quitely gone about his job.

There are still some however who are still waiting for him to hit the same heights he achieved during his glory days at Marconi, the same form that saw him get drafted into the Socceroos.

Whilst it's unfair to make comparisons of the Maloney of old to the current reformed model, Maloney insists that his role at the Glory is different to what it was previously.

"I've been asked to play a different role at Perth," he explains.

"At Marconi I was given pretty much a free reign behind the strikers, so I was scoring more goals.

"Here I'm playing more of a central midfield position.

Coming to a place like Perth also there is a squad of 25 and any one of those players could probably walk into the starting eleven of pretty much any other club.

"The situation at Marconi was that there was they were pretty much reliant on one or two players to have big games, but that is not the case at Perth."

It has taken time for Maloney to settle into the Perth lifestyle, but it's something that he is a lot morecomfortable with in his second season at the club.

"Last season was a bit funny and took me a bit of time to settle in," he says.

"It was also a bit disappointing because I spent a lot of time on the sidelines through injury.

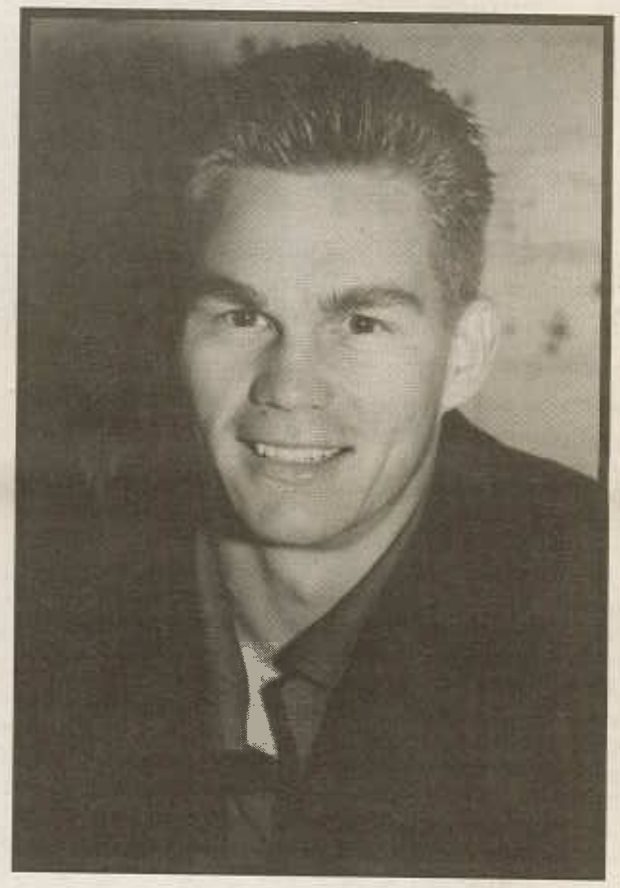
"This season has been a lot better and I'm staying injury-free and starting regularly.

"Coming to Perth has definitely been a change for the better, when I was Sydney I was working as well as playing, whereas here I'm playing full-time and can concentrate solely on playing football."

Despite being favoured to win the competition the past two seasons running, the Glory faltered in the pressure-cooker atmosphere that is finals football.

This year the only thing that has changed is their shorter price for taking out the title, and it would certainly take a brave man to bet against them.

"There is an expectation for us to win every game, and the players know that," Maloney comments.



"But in the real world, people have to realise how hard it is to win every match.

"The players aren't getting carried away with what we've done this season, people usually don't remember who finishes as Minor Premiers.

"It's winning the title that counts and finals football is totally different, but for a lot of players like myself we've never won a Grand Final before and we realise that this is probably our best chance to do so."

SOCCER TODAY - available at newsagencies every Thursday

Letters to the Editor

May be sent on any subject relative to football. Letters should be kept brief, preferably relative to a single point. The Publisher reserves the right to alter (for the sake of grammar or clarity) or delete any letter. Address all correspondence to royal_publishing@yahoo.com.au or Soccer Today at PO Box 566, Kogarah, NSW 2217 or by fax to (02) 9588-6500. A contact name and telephone number must be supplied although nom-de-plumes may be used. Unidentified or unsigned letters will not be printed under any circumstances.

CONGRATULATIONS ON GRASS ROOTS COVERAGE

Sir,

Congratulations on such a fine magazine. I particularly enjoy your coverage of the grass roots game because nobody else does it. We can all read about the National League and the overseas stars in the metropolitan dailies, but the lower levels of the game miss out. Thankfully you guys do stories about the ordinary players who are out there playing the game for its own sake - not for fame and fortune. I enjoyed the story about the Fairfield Pats side two weeks ago and I also enjoy reading what the likes of new Canterbury coach Laki Konistis have to say because they are largely unheard. Again, congratulations and please keep up the good work for those of us who don't necessarily look for the so-called big stories.

Barry Leader, Condell Park, NSW

NATIONAL LEAGUE ANALYSIS INACCURATE

Sir,

I read with interest Adam Leto's National League analysis. What a load of bollocks. While the SA stats may suggest an increase in crowds, I don't believe it. I enjoy the NSL and being based in Sydney have attended several games this season. Without a doubt crowds are DOWN.

Adam obviously doesn't get around to many NSL games and maybe he should because then he would be able to paint the real picture, not just one derived from stats provided by the national body.

Jason Callender, St John's Park, NSW

RALE RASIC A LEGEND? HE SURE IS!

Sir,

I enjoy your publication, which I believe is the best on the market and I especially enjoy the Rale Rasic column. Rale knows his football and he doesn't buggerise around and try to avoid the real issues. He tells it straight. I read with interest the involvement of Frank Arok and Johnny Warren in the development scheme at Olympic and fully understand Rale's concerns. But the fact is that forewarned or otherwise parents get so worked up over sending their kids overseas that the practice has reached epidemic levels. Until parents are educated on the perils of such practices, it will continue. Thanks for giving Rale a voice, he's great. And thanks for the great read.

Barry Lewis, Bankstown, NSW.

Sharkettes? I want more!

Sir,

It's not very often that I ever buy magazines but when I saw your cover with the twin Sharkettes staring up at me, I just had to part with my hard-earned.

Good story, mate, but is there any chance of me joining the publisher and the photographer at one of the shoots?

Seriously, surely Tina needs someone to carry her equipment or maybe Derek would like my humble self to take notes or carry his laptop.

I know I sound desperate and a bit silly but good on yer Soccer Today, you've got me!

Stevo, Caringbah, NSW.

SA levy looks like fait accompli

By Guy Hand

SOCCER Australia's controversial player levy is now certain to go ahead after officials in Victoria and New South Wales today agreed publicly to support the plan.

After weeks of speculation, junior and senior soccer players throughout Australia will be hit in the hip pocket with a levy of up to $35 starting this season.

All players nationally will be slugged with an annual registration fee - $6.50 for juniors, $12 for seniors and $35 for players and coaches on contracts.

The levy will be brought in this season and is expected to remain in place for the next five years.

NSW Federation stakeholders still have to ratify it, but Soccer Australia says it has the right to force federations to collect it on its behalf.

Soccer Australia, which is believed to be more than $2 million in debt, says the levy will help the organisation out of its financial predicament and help grow the game nationally.

Sources within Soccer Australia say the levy could be worth $2 million a year to the embattled organisation.

Victorian Soccer Federation chairman Manny Galanos and his NSW counterpart, Tom Doumanis - who run the two most powerful state federations - say they will collect the levy on behalf on Soccer Australia.

Galanos said today the VSF was not happy with the registration fee, but believed it was the only way Soccer Australia could address its financial woes and help the game go forward. "We're not over the moon about it, but without the levy the game will go backwards," Galanos said.

"This is the first time in 10 or 15 years that we've had a unified Soccer Australia board.

"We support (chairman) Ian Knop and the board and we believe in what they're doing for the game. But while we will collect the levy, it's important that the VSF keeps checks and balances on Soccer Australia and what the money is being used for."

Only the Queensland Soccer Federation has refused to collect the levy.

But QSF chairman Tony Petty is believed to be under siege from within his own organisation and may not survive a forthcoming election.

Doumanis, who was elected NSW Soccer Federation president on Wednesday night ahead of controversial Tony Labbozzetta, said Australian soccer's governing body could not be allowed to collapse.

"I think we all benefit if we can free Soccer Australia of its cycle of financial insolvency," he said.

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Liverpool Olympic babies aiming for even more success

By Adam Leto

LAST season I did a story on Liverpool Olympic's Under 6 nursery side.

No big deal right? Yeah most teams go through a season scoring over 200 goals and conceding just seven don't they.

Most kids aged four or five are barely capable of running up and down a pitch let alone knocking in goals.

But it didn't end there for these wannabe soccer stars, as they learnt more than just winning soccer games last season.

"The most important thing is not the amount of goals they score or how many games they win but just making sure these kids develop," explains coach Greg Carluccio.

"You see it in the boys when they walk off the field together in a group with their arms around each other, and to see that at that age is really what the game is all about."

The team were rewarded for their efforts, being named Liverpool Olympic's junior team of the year.

This season Carluccio is looking at continuing on from the high-standards set last year, and from what he has seen from his boys so far things are looking just as good, if not better.

"I think that if we don't crack 350 goals this season then there's something wrong," he confidently suggests.

"We've brought in a new boy and the squad is stronger, it's just unbelievable how good some of these boys are.

"I had parents ringing me saying how bored their kids were and that they wanted to get back into it.

"So we ended up starting about four weeks before Christmas and we train every Sunday."

The youngsters from Sydney's South West are adopting an even more professional approach this season and have even picked up a major sponsor in Eco Spring Water who will no doubt ensure that none of the players go thirsty.

The structure of the junior competitions is that there are no tables or points accumulated until the under nine age group which is played on a full field.

That hasn't stopped this group from continuing to achieve and improve.

"We're working on knocking the ball around and running into space, more teamwork stuff," Carluccio states.

"Some of the work I'm doing with them I've done with 15-year-olds.

""I think also that a lot of the boys have gotten a lot of confidence from last season, and they've realised what they've done."

Again I don't want to sound repetitious but these boys are how old?

"I've seen a lot of these boys mature and I don't see them as kids anymore," Coach Carluccio says.

"I mean the boys will still rumble me and try to chase me; stuff like that.

"But the great thing about these kids is that it doesn't matter if they win by fifty goals or one, their intensity doesn't drop they just enjoy playing.

"They're keen as mustard, and they act like they're professionals.

"On the other side of the coin realistically they're still babies so you have to consider that also."

It appears as though the competitive nature of Carluccio is rubbing off on his young troops, and his goals don't just lie with getting the best out of his players in the short term.

"From my experience as a player, I can almost guarantee that at least three of these boys will play overseas one day," he boldy comments.

"There's so much potential here it's scary. One of the boys will get the ball from the back he'll look up knock it, run into space the other player will play it down the line, he'll get the ball and cross it in.

It's unbelievable from kids this age."

With a year under his belt, Carluccio like his students is learning all the time too.

"The biggest key to teaching young kids is communication," he says.

"Now that I've spent a year with them I can work with them more.

"They're not too young to challenge, and that allows the kids to progress quicker but at the same time you've got to have fun with it."

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The SOCCER WEARHOUSE is managed by Bill Cullinan. Either Bill or his assistant, Roy Ashpole, will be pleased to answer any queries. Written quotations are available on request.

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Northern Spirit v Brisbane Strikers
North Sydney Oval
Friday February 8, 2002

NORTHERN SPIRIT

Coach: Mick Hickman

1 Lupce Acevski (Goalkeeper)
2 Julian Watts (Defender)
3 Simon Bell (Defender)
4 Noel Spencer (Midfielder)
5 Robbie Trajkovski (Midfielder)
6 Scott Thomas (Midfielder)
7 Andrew McDermott (Midfielder)
8 Craig Foster (Midfielder)
9 Adrian Cervinski (Striker)
10 Pablo Cardozo (Striker)
11 Troy Cranney (Midfielder)
12 John Hutchinson (Midfielder)
14 Michael Cartwright (Defender)
15 Jeremy Seales (Defender)
16 Simon Catanzaro (Midfielder)
18 Robbie Enes (Midfielder)
19 Ryan Griffiths (Striker)
20 Paul Henderson (Goalkeeper)

BRISBANE STRIKERS

Coach: John Kosmina

1 Jason Kearton (Goalkeeper)
2 Richie Alagich (Defender)
3 Shane Stefanutto (Defender)
4 Jon McKain (Defender)
5 Stuart McLaren (Defender)
6 Peter Grierson (Midfielder)
7 Fernando Rech (Midfielder)
8 Adam Webber (Midfielder)
9 Paul Foster (Striker)
10 Kris Trajanovski (Striker)
11 John Carbone (Midfielder)
12 David Pilic (Midfielder)
13 Wayne Heath (Defender)
14 Daniel Dreger (Midfielder)
15 Matthew McKay (Midfielder)
16 Ronnie McQuilter (Defender)
17 Michael Baird (Striker)
18 Lawrence Drake (Striker)
20 Carey Baldock (Goalkeeper)
30 Nathan Coe (Goalkeeper)

Did You Know - NORTHERN SPIRIT

1. Who was the first Northern Spirit player ever to be sent off?
2. Of the current players, who has played the most first grade games for Northern Spirit?
3. In what country was Northern Spirit defender Jacek Sobczyk born?
4. Who are the two original players from the very first Northern Spirit game still at the club?
5. How old is Scott Thomas?

Did You Know - BRISBANE STRIKERS

1. What club did John Kosmina coach with before Brisbane Strikers?
2. Who has scored the most goals for Brisbane this season?
3. Besides Brisbane, what other NSL club did Stuart McLaren play for?
4. In what season did the Brisbane Strikers play in the NSL Grand Final?
5. Who has played the most NSL games for the Brisbane Strikers?

Did You Know - AUSTRALIAN SOCCER

1. Which two Australians play for Watford in the English first division?
2. How many NSL championships did Sydney City win?
3. Who is the only player playing in the Premira Liga?
4. Which ground in Australia has hosted the most NSL games?

ANSWERS:
Northern Spirit: 1. Mark Rudan, 2. Robbie Enes, 3. Poland, 4. Troy Cranney and Paul Henderson, 5. 27.
Brisbane: 1. Newcastle Breakers, 2. Paul Foster, 3. Wollongong, 4. 1996/97, 5. Clint Bolton.
Australian Soccer: 1. Paul Okon and Richard Johnson, 2. Four, 3. John Aloisi, 4. Hindmarsh Stadium, 5. South Melbourne.

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Noel Spencer SOLD	Troy Cranney	Paul Henderson	Jacob Rex
Robert Trajkovski SOLD	John Hutchinson	Adam Griffiths	Michael Cartwright

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Demons still leading the way in youth development

By Adam Leto

LAST season Blacktown City Demons were seen as one of the benchmarks in youth development in Australia.

Club championships, age titles, players getting chosen to represent their country, trials overseas, there was little that the Blacktown club hadn't achieved.

There is no doubting that the main strength of the game in this country and probably the only thing keeping Australian soccer afloat is the potency of our youth systems.

Leading the way are Blacktown, following on from their Premier Youth League results last season the Demons are taking somewhat of a different approach this season.

"The past two seasons we have recognised that we, and-when I say we I mean the system has been putting too much pressure on kids to win club championships and the like," Demons Director of Youth Coaching Ken Schembri told Soccer Today.

"Our point of view this season is to get the older kids from 15s to 17s ready and prepared to play at a higher level.

"And for our younger kids from 11s to 14s we will be working on their skills and development.

"For example we had four boys from our 15s that won the title last year now become a part of the NSW Institute this year.

"That's a great thing and that's the sort of thing we'll be trying to do.

"We've set a few different objective this year and we're going to be concentrating on developing players rather then winning championships."

Schembri is realistic in his approach to keeping junior players, understanding and encouraging players to go to bigger clubs once they've been developed.

"We've always done consistently well with the 11s to 14s, that has been our main strength," he explains.

"We lose a lot of our 15s to 17s to a lot of clubs that have National League backing like the Northern Spirit's and Marconi's.

"That's fine, we always find a way to bring other players through, and I don't really see that trend changing too much in the future, it's just a natural thing."

Some of the recent graduates from Blacktown's youth system include Adam Kwasnik, who is currently starting up front for Parramatta Power in his rookie year in the NSL.

Steven Baveas is another one who after joining Northern Spirit last season, is now trialing throughout Europe with clubs such as Scottish giants Glasgow Rangers.

The new format of the Premier Youth League has been met with acclaim by most coaches and players in the league.

It now allows for each side to play each other twice and the competition is sure to be a lot closer then in past seasons.

The new league consists of the best of the best and there can be no excuses for any side once the season is ended.

Knowing this clubs have gone about preparing for what they know will be the toughest challenge they have faced at this level. "Elite youth football is what it's all about and there have been some changes to the competition but it's a good format," Schembri says.

"Clubs are getting better and whereas in past seasons there have been probably only two teams dominate, I think this season there will be about six strong clubs fighting for the title."

Demons first grade coach Brian Brown knows better than anyone that there's plenty of young talent at Blacktown.

SOCCER TODAY - on sale Thursdays

Who is the former Socceroo player on the left?

Clue: he is a current NSL coach and his team are likely Top Six material.

Still stumped? Here he is again, this time in his beloved green and gold.

Congratulations to Frank Snaidero of Campsie for guessing last week's mystery man: Sharks chief Peter Raskopoulos.

THE BIG GAME:
Parramatta Power versus Olympic Sharks at Parramatta Stadium, Saturday 9 February 2002

THE Olympic Sharks will be looking to continue on their three match wining streak when they take on the Power at Parramatta on Saturday night.

The Sharks are certainly the hottest team in the league and no doubt Power custodian Les Pogliacomi will have his work cut out trying to counter the Shark onslaught led by new signing Milicic.

The Power are on somewhat of a mini-run, having drawn away to Adelaide last week and defeating Newcastle the week before.

Their game is largely built around their solid back four, but are still to find any regularity up front with Mitchell continually searching for a front pairing that can perform consistently.

Lately he has gone with youngsters Roodenburg and Kwasnik, whilst the likes of big-name off season buys Buonavoglia and Lapsansky warm the bench.

Still the Power are sitting just inside the Top Five and will need strong performances from youngsters Elrich and Thompson if they want to cause any type of headaches for the Sharks defence.

A defence that has looked a lot steadier under the leadership of Ante Juric and his organisational ability has played a key role in the Sharks run of late.

Olympic's midfielders have hit a purple patch of form and Pondlejak can't stop scoring, his combination with Halpin has resulted in plenty of goal-scoring opportunities.

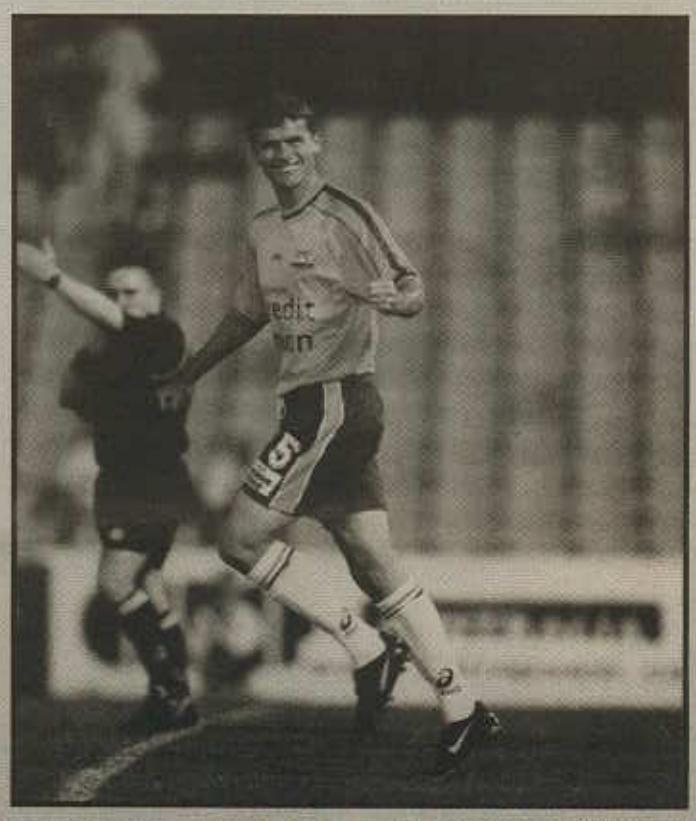
The battle between tall speedsters Lindsay Wilson and Ahmad Elrich out-wide also promises to be an exciting contest.

It was an entertaining fixture the last time these two teams met with an Alex Tobin equaliser in the 81st minute leaving both sides with a share of the points.

It will be interesting to see whether the Parramatta side take the attack to the Sharks, who will no doubt take advantage through their speed merchants in the middle and out wide to counter.

Or will the Power try and restrain the Olympic attack through sheer weight of numbers in the middle and defensive third.

For the crowd's sake lets hope that Mitchell stays positive, and takes the game to the Sharks.



This could prove to be of benefit, as we have seen that when sides do have a go weaknesses can be found in the Olympic line-up.

This was no more noticeable then Olympic's last defeat at the hands of the Kingz, when the New Zealand outfit showed that enthusiasm and hussle can sometimes overwhelm talent and skill.

The Power no doubt will be hoping that this too is the case on Saturday night.

Stats:

Possible line-ups:

Power

1 Les Pogliacomi (gk) 2 David Barrett 4 Nick Orlic 5 Alex Tobin 7 Wayne O'Sullivan 8 Matthew Thompson 21 Ahmad Elrich 24 Steve Fitzsimmons 26 Luke Roodenburg 27 Adam Kwasnik 28 Peter Bennett; **Subs:** 10 Lubo Lapsansky 16 Brett Holman 17 Steve Eagleton 32 Danny Vukovic (gk)

Players to watch: Wayne O'Sullivan, Nick Orlic

Sharks:

1 Clint Bolton (gk) 2 Stephen Laybutt 7 Lindsay Wilson 8 Tom Pondeljak 9 Dylan MacAllister 10 Troy Halpin 11 Jade North 19 Ante Milicic 23 Andrew Packer 24 Andrew Durante 28 Ante Juric; **Subs:** 4 Paul Kohler 27 Hiroyuki Ishida Wayne Srhoj 20 Glen Moss (gk)

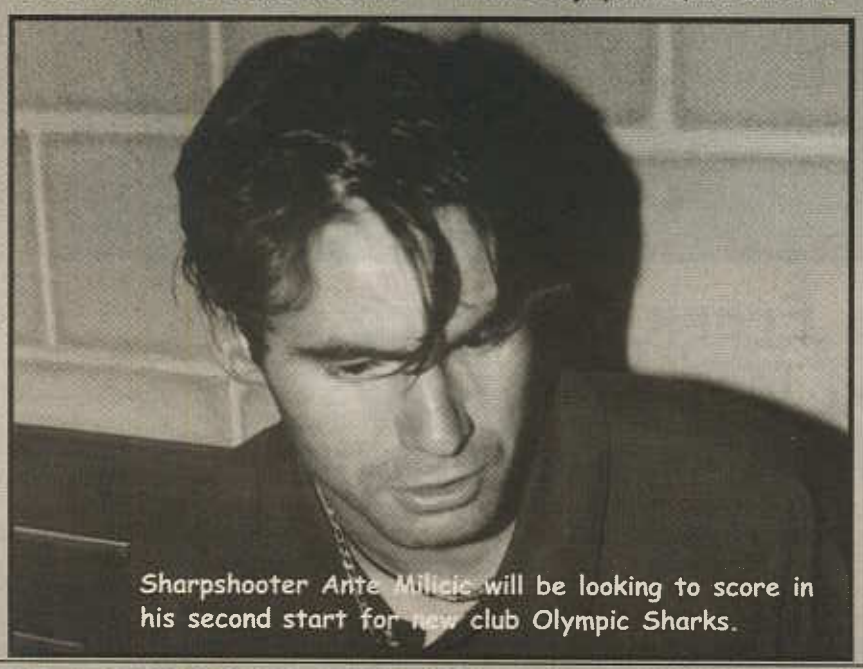
Players to watch: Dylan Macallister, Ante Milicic

X-Factor:

The Power will come out and try to intimidate by pushing the Sharks around so this one might get a bit ugly.

SOCCER TODAY Prediction:

Sharks sneak home by one goal.



Sharpshooter Ante Milicic will be looking to score in his second start for new club Olympic Sharks.

NATIONAL SOCCER LEAGUE PREVIEWS

Football Kingz v Wollongong Wolves at North Harbour
Friday 8 February

WOLLONGONG are still clinging to a faint hope of reaching the finals, but that possibility is appearing more and more less likely.

Last week we caught a rare glimpse of prized recruit Sean Babic who has been out of favour with Wolves boss Corry.

The Kingz put in a spirited display against the Glory, but like a lot of their matches this season they showed that they can compete but just lack that winning mentality needed to beat the top sides.

Should be a close one and the Kingz will fancy their chances against a desperate Wolves side.

Possible line-ups:
Kingz
1 Michael Theoklitos (gk) 2 Jonathon Perry 6 George Goutzioulis 9 Paul Urlovic 11 Andrew Vlahos 12 Heremaia Ngata 14 John Markovski 17 Robbie Hooker 22 Campbell Banks 24 Chris Jackson 25 Sean Douglas; **Subs:** 4 Levent Osman 13 Jeffrey Campbell 16 Sean Fallon 26 Scott Bishop (gk)
Players to watch: George Goutzioulis, Andy Vlahos

Wolves:
1 Dean Anastasiadis (gk) 2 George Souris 3 Alvin Ceccoli 4 Robert Stanton 5 David Cervinski 6 Alex Castro 9 Zeljko Babic 10 Stuart Young 11 Naum Sekulovski 17 Ben Blake 24 Dustin Wells; **Subs:** 13 Con Anthopoulos 21 Harvey Rodriguez (+86') 25 Greg Sharland 20 Grant Barlow (gk)
Players to watch: Naum Sekulovski, Zeljko Babic
X-factor: This could be the final throw of the dice for the Wolves, and there are certainly a few murmurs about the coaching future of Ron Corry down Wollongong way.
Prediction: Kingz by two

Newcastle United v Adelaide City Force at Marathon Stadium
Friday 8 February

NEWCASTLE returned to the winners circle last week with a convincing performance against the Wolves.

No doubt the inclusions of Middleby, Shcripa and Zoricich made a big difference in their side's attacking ability.

On the other side of the fence Adelaide turned on another lifeless performance at home to the Power.

Possible line-ups
Newcastle United:
1 Daniel Beltrame (gk) 3 Andrew Roberts 4 Chris Zoricich 6 Matthew Bingley 9 Joel Griffiths 11 Peter Tsekenis 12 Scott Baillie 13 Milan Blagojevic 16 Joseph Schirripa 17 Esala Masi 22 Robbie Middleby
Subs: 2 Michael Prentice 7 Travis Dodd 10 Daniel McBreen 20 Bradley Swancott (gk)
Players to watch: Robbie Middleby, Daniel Beltrame

Adelaide City Force: 20 Daniel Godley (gk) 2 Matthew Kemp (-70') 3 Iain Fyfe 4 Ante Kovacevic 7 Lucas Pantelis (-75') 8 Carl Veart 10 Aurelio Vidmar 11 Alex Moreira 12 Scott Tunbridge 13 Kristian Rees 22 Mislav Saric; **Subs:** 18 Ivan Karlovic 21 Adriano Pellegrino 14 Aaron Goulding
Players to watch: Ante Kovacevic, Scott Tunbridge
X-Factor: The Force are struggling in attack and in the midfield whilst Newcastle have plenty of flair and should prove too much to handle.
Prediction: Newcastle goal-fest.

Melbourne Knights v South Melbourne
Saturday 9 February

THIS MELBOURNE derby has all the makings of a cracker with both sides hitting their straps in recent weeks.

There's also plenty of skill on show, with the likes of Boutsianis and Trimboli up against the likes of last week's hat-trick hero Joel Porter and the silky De Jesus and Da Costa.

Defence will go out the window as both sides throw caution to the wind and set sail for goal.

Despite Cantona not being able to make it down for this one, when we have our own Australian version in Con Boutsianis a good crowd should still be in attendance.

Possible line ups
Melbourne Knights:
1 Martin John (gk) 3 Rodrigo Vargas 4 Sasa Ognenovski 6 Andrew Marth 7 Daniel Vasilevski 8 Kresimir Marusic 9 Joel Porter 10 Antonio Da Costa 14 Daniel Piorkowski 18 Andy Vargas 25 Ivo De Jesus; **Subs:** 12 Boris Ovcin 13 Ivan Jolic 15 Daniel Debevc 30 Darren McGrath (gk)
Players to watch: Andrew Marth, Joel Porter

South Melbourne:
1 Michael Petkovic (gk) 2 Steve Iosifidis 3 Fausto De Amicis 4 Mehmet Durakovic 7 Steve Panopoulos 9 Paul Trimboli 11 Joe Bacak 15 Nick Tolios 16 Massimo Murdocca 19 Patrick Kisnorbo 25 Con Boutsianis; **Subs:** 10 Peter Buljan12 Radomir Sekulovski 21 Vince Lia 23 Eugen Galekovic (gk)
Players to watch: Steve Panopoulos, Con Boutsianis
X-Factor: Both goalkeepers have been in good form and could well come down to who has the best game between the sticks that decides this one.
Prediciton: South by 2

Sydney United v Perth Glory at Sydney United Sports Centre
Sunday 10 February

BY kick-off United coach Culina will be a lot more settled then last week after his altercation with ref Con Diomis.

Despite the loss of star striker Milicic, the Bravehearts still managed to perform, which certainly surprised a few people.

But there's no respite this week against league leaders Perth who although not playing with any great fluency have still been getting the results in recent weeks.

In the back of the Glory's mind will be last year's visit to Edensor Park when they were beaten 2-1 by the hosts.

Possible line ups
Sydney United:
28 Vilson Knezevic (gk) 3 Vince Savoca 4 Elvis Olic 6 Michael Cunico 9 Gabriel Mendez 13 Ante Deur 14 Goran Talevski 16 Commins Menapi 17 Paul Bilokapic 18 Daniel Watkins 24 Sebastian Sinozic; **Subs:** 15 Aytec Genc 21 Mile Jedinak 29 Christian Cevenini 1 Steven Minovski (gk)
Players to watch: Commins Menapi, Goran Talevski

South's Con Boutsianis will be looking forward to this weekend's derby against the Knights.

Perth Glory:
1 Jason Petkovic (gk) 2 Matthew Horsley 3 Jamie Harnwell 5 Craig Deans 8 Brad Maloney 10 Bobby Despotovski 11 Michael Garcia 12 Bradley Hassell 15 Edgar Aldrighi Junior 16 Damian Mori 18 Shane Pryce; **Subs:** 9 Alistair Edwards 23 David Tarka 26 Nick Mrdja 30 Vince Matassa (gk)
Players to watch: Matthew Horsley, Brad Hassell
X-Factor: The fitness of Mendez is a major concern for the Bravehearts, and they could be facing an uphill battle if he pulls out through injury.
Prediction: Culina re-writes his Christmas card list again with another narrow loss

NSL SCOREBOARD

BRISBANE 3

F Rech 31'/70' P Foster 39'

BRISBANE: J Kearton (gk) 2 R Alagich 3 S Stefanutto 4 J McKain (-60') 5 S McLaren 6 P Grierson 7 F Rech 9 P Foster (-65') 10 K Trajanovski (-54') 11 J Carbone 13 W Heath Subs: 14 D Dreger (+60') 15 M McKay (+54') 17 M Baird (+65') 30 N Coe (gk)
MELBOURNE: 1 M John (gk) 3 R Vargas 4 S Ognenovski 6 A Marth 7 D Vasilevski 8 K Marusic (-58') 9 J Porter 10 A Da Costa (-40') 14 D Piorkowski 18 A Vargas (-60') 25 I De Jesus Subs: 12 B Ovcin (+40') 13 I Jolic (+60') 15 D Debevc (+58') 30 D McGrath (gk)
Ground: Ballymore **Crowd**: 2344

KNIGHTS 5

A Da Costa 7' J Porter 23'/49/57
A Marth 38' **Referee:** Mark Shield

WOLVES 0

NEWCASTLE 2

D Cervinski own goal 86' M Blagojevic 20'
Referee: Simon Micallef

Wolves: 1 D Anastasiadis (gk) 3 A Ceccoli 4 R Stanton 5 D Cervinski 6 A Castro 10 S Young 11 N Sekulovski (-86') 13 C Anthopoulos (-62') 17 B Blake 24 D Wells 25 G Sharland (-59') Subs: 2 G Souris (+62') 9 Z Babic (+59') 21 H Rodriguez (+86') 20 G Barlow (gk)
Newcastle: 1 D Beltrame (gk) 3 A Roberts 4 C Zoricich 6 M Bingley 9 J Griffiths 11 P Tsekenis 12 S Baillie 13 M Blagojevic 16 J Schirripa 17 E Masi (-59') 22 R Middleby (-78')
Subs: 2 M Prentice 7 T Dodd (+78') 10 D McBreen (+59') 20 B Swancott (gk) **Ground**: WIN Stadium **Crowd**: 3046

ADELAIDE CITY 1

A Moreira 27'

POWER 1

M Thompson 85'
Referee: Perry Mur

Adelaide City: 20 D Godley (gk) 2 M Kemp (-70') 3 I Fyfe 4 A Kovacevic 7 L Pantelis (-75') 8 C Veart 10 A Vidmar 11 A Moreira 12 S Tunbridge 13 K Rees 14 A Goulding Subs: 18 I Karlovic 21 A Pellegrino (+75') 22 M Saric (+70')
Parramata Power: 1 L Pogliacomi (gk) 2 D Barrett 4 Nick Orlic (-79') 5 A Tobin 7 W O'Sullivan 8 M Thompson 21 A Elrich 24 S Eagleton (-46') 26 L Roodenburg (-46') 27 A Kwasnik 28 P BennettSubs: 10 L Lapsansky (+79') 16 B Holman (+46') 17 S Fitzsimmons (+46') 32 D Vukovic (gk) **Ground:** Hindmarsh Stadium **Crowd**: 3200

MARCONI 2

N Tome 31' G Last 90'

SYDNEY UNITED 2

A Deur 44' C Menapi 76'
Referee: Con Diomis

Marconi: 30 B Catlin (gk) 2 M Beauchamp 4 A Costanzo 5 D Longo 6 C Care (-58') 7 B Renaud 8 G Last 10 J Maisano (-58') 11 N Tome (-78') 22 A Brosque 23 C Gibson Subs: 12 S Bozinovski (+78') 13 S Webb (+58') 15 R Brownlie (+58') 20 D Schwarzer (gk)
Sydney United: 28 V Knezevic (gk) 3 V Savoca 4 E Olic 6 M Cunico 9 G Mendez (-93') 13 A Deur 14 G Talevski 16 C Menapi (-89') 17 P Bilokapic 18 D Watkins (-62') 24 S Sinozic
Subs: 15 A Genc (+89') 21 M Jedinak (+93') 29 C Cevenini (+62') 1 S Minovski (gk) **Ground**: Marconi Stadium **Crowd**: 4362

PERTH GLORY 1

B Maloney 55'

KINGZ 0

Referee: Craig Zetter

Perth Glory: 1 J Petkovic (gk) 2 M Horsley 3 J Harnwell 5 C Deans 8 B Maloney 10 B Despotovski (-89') 11 M Garcia (-87') 12 B Hassell (-80') 15 E Aldrighi Junior 16 D Mori 18 S Pryce Subs: 9 A Edwards (+80') 23 D Tarka (+87') 26 N Mrdja (+89') 30 V Matassa (gk)
Kingz: 1 M Theoklitos (gk) 2 J Perry 6 G Goutzioulis 9 P Urlovic (-89') 11 A Vlahos 12 H Ngata (-86') 14 J Markovski 17 R Hooker 22 C Banks (-82') 24 C Jackson 25 S Douglas Subs: 4 L Osman (+89') 13 J Campbell (+86') 16 S Fallon (+82') 26 S Bishop (gk)
Ground: Perth Oval **Crowd**: 12,035

SHARKS 3

A Milicic 50' T Pondeljak 76' A Packer 87'

SPIRIT 0

Referee: Eddie Lennie

Sharks: 1 C Bolton (gk) 2 S Laybutt 6 W Srhoj (-46') 7 L Wilson 8 T Pondeljak 10 T Halpin 11 J North (-87') 19 A Milicic (-88') 23 A Packer 24 A Durante 28 A Juric Subs: 4 P Kohler (+87') 9 D Macallister (+46') 27 H Ishida (+88') 20 G Moss (gk)
Spirit: 20 P Henderson (gk) 2 J Watts 3 S Bell 4 N Spencer 6 S Thomas (-87') 7 A McDermott (-68') 8 C Foster (-87') 9 A Cervinski 10 P Cardozo 11 T Cranney 14 M Cartwright Subs: 18 R Enes (+87') 19 R Griffiths (+68') 21 A Griffiths (+87') 1 L Acevski (gk)
Ground: Toyota Park **Crowd**: 6124

SOUTH

BYE

NATIONAL SOCCER LEAGUE:
Standings at Round 17

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
1 Perth Glory	16	12	3	1	36	14	39
2 Brisbane Strikers	16	7	4	4	25	21	25
3 Newcastle United	16	7	7	2	21	14	28
4 Olympic Sharks	15	8	2	5	22	12	26
5 Northern Spirit	16	6	4	6	21	25	22
6 Parramatta Power	16	6	4	6	18	17	22
7 Marconi	16	5	5	6	18	20	20
8 Melbourne Knights	16	7	1	8	25	26	22
9 Wollongong Wolves	16	4	5	7	16	25	17
10 Sydney United	16	4	4	8	17	26	16
11 Adelaide City Force	15	3	6	6	20	21	15
12 South Melbourne	15	3	5	7	11	16	14
13 Football Kingz	16	3	4	9	22	35	13

LEADING SCORERS

12	Mori, Damian	(Perth Glory)
10	Despotovski, Bobby	(Perth Glory)
10	Paul Foster	(Brisbane)
9	Milicic, Ante	(Sharks)
8	Urlovic, Paul	(Kingz)
8	Da Costa, Antonio	(Knights)
8	Rech, Fernando	(Brisbane)
7	Cardozo, Pablo	(Spirit)
7	Porter, Joel	(Knights)
6	Griffiths, Joel	(Newcastle)
6	Tunbridge, Scott	(Adelaide City)
6	Maloney, Brad	(Perth Glory)
6	Moreira, Alex	(Adelaide City)
5	Pondeljak, Tommy	(Sharks)
4	Buonavoglia, John	(Parramatta)
4	Carbone, John	(Brisbane)
4	Maisano, John	(Marconi)
4	Masi, Esala	(Newcastle)
4	Menapi, Commins	(Sydney United)
4	Young, Stuart	(Wolves)
3	Arambasic, Zlatko	(Parramatta)
3	Bacak, Joe	(South)
3	Boutsianis, Con	(South)
3	Brownlie, Royce	(Marconi)
3	Carle, Nick	(Sharks)
3	Cervinski, Adrian	(Spirit)
3	Goutzioulis, George	(Kingz)
3	Gulessarian, Kevo	(Marconi)
3	Harnwell, Jamie	(Perth)
3	Hutchinson, John	(Spirit)
3	MacAllister, Dylan	(Sharks)
3	Marth, Andrew	(Knights)
3	McBreen, Daniel	(Newcastle)
3	Menapi, Commins	(Sydney United)
3	Tome, Norman	(Marconi)
3	Trajanovski, Kris	(Brisbane)
3	Vlahos, Andrew	(Kingz FC)

Mountain boys need to score more goals to compete

By Adam Leto

The Penrith Panthers have come a long way this season, proving what many people have always thought-that the Penrith area is sleeping giant in terms of football potential.

There is no better example of this then these youngsters initiation into the second toughest league in the country.

With little experience behind them the brash young mountain men have dished it up to some of the best players in the country and although they have taken the occasional beating, they have given as well as they have received.

During pre-season, coach Tony Rassmussen put forward some clear objectives for his side.

The first was to be competitive. There were to be no three or four nil hidings. Every game will be hard-fought for the entire 90 minutes and the opposition will have to work for every goal.

That aim it can be said, so far has been achieved.

By Rassmussen's own admission he doesn't have the quickest, the biggest or most skillful side.

But the strength that he has worked on is his side's fitness.

That leads to goal number two: We will be the fittest side in the competition and will attempt to run other sides off the park- a second success for Rassmussen.

Looking at the competition table with the Panthers sitting near the bottom it would be easy for opposing side's to mark down the Panthers match as an easy W in their season tally.

But that hasn't been the case as Rassmussen's tactics have helped make the Panthers one of the most toughest and frugal side's in the competition.

When opposing teams match up against this Penrith side they know they will be in for a solid work-out.

"I think the main problem we've had this season is just putting our chances away," concedes Rassmussen.

"We've just had too many draws, and if you could turn half of those draws into wins then we'd be in a lot

better position on the table.

"I cant' say I'm totally happy with how things have gone this season as ultimately I would've liked to be sitting just outside the Top Five at this stage."

One of the most staggering statistics that backs up Rassmussen's claim for a higher position on the ladder

is the fact that they have conceded the third lowest amount of goals.

According to Rassmussen, it could only take one game for his strikers to click to turn around what has otherwise been a poor season in front of goals.

"I think it would only take a couple of goals, to really bring out the best in these boys," he states.

"If someone like Tim O'Connell was to get going it wouldn't matter which team we were playing I don't think they'd be able to stop him.

"The first half of this season the young boys have really matured and they have great potential.

"The thing is now that they have to take that next step and they have to do it themselves, it's not something that I can do.

"Things like being able to protect a lead and know how to stay composed when things get tight.

"They've learnt a lot but like I said it's time to build on that now and take it to that next level."

It seems the only problem that the main problem facing Rassmussen is being able to hang onto all this exciting talent.

"I've had a really great time this year and that's largely because of all the great guys in the team," Rassmussen says.

"There are no egos, just a great bunch of blokes out there giving it their best shot.

"It just makes it so much easier when you have guys that listen to what you say and are totally committed.

"Most of the boys have signed two year contracts, and some are already being looked at by bigger clubs.

"We know we can't match it with the money they'll offer, but they deserve to be playing on a bigger stage and we'll do what we can to get them there."

Penrith may be languishing near the tail-end of the NSW Premier League but they've pushed the likes of Bonnyrigg and Parramatta (above).

THE BIG GAME:
Bankstown City Lions v Parramatta Eagles
at Jensen Park February 2002

THE Lions are coming off their biggest win of the season and go into the match against the second placed Eagles full of confidence.

The Eagles too will have plenty of confidence coming off a hard-fought victory against leaders Bonnyrigg.

The Lions have found much more consistency since new coach Ljube Jancev has come in and turned things around.

With a spot in the Top Five for the first time this season, the Lions will be doing everything they can to hold off other potential finalists such as Blacktown, Belconnen and Canterbury-Marrickville.

New arrivals Leo Carle and Darren Iocca are starting to find their feet out at Jensen Park, and there is certainly a renewed spirit at the club.

Scoring has been the Lions main problem this season but with the likes of Colin Luff, Iocca, Goce Trposki and Iain Macdonald they have plenty of options to consider.

It's been the midfield that has really picked up their efforts in recent weeks in particular the form of Freddy Umlil. Combined with the majestic Leo Carle, scoring goals shouldn't be a problem.

But scoring goals won't be an easy task for the Lions as they face one of the toughest midfield and defences in the league, the only defence that has kept a clean-sheet against the Bonnyrigg White Eagles this season.

Whilst the defence has come together solidly the form of goalkeeper Jason Holmes has also been something of a revelation this season.

His form has been rivalled by that of Josevski in goals for the Lions, who as always has been there when needed by the Lions.

The former Super League keeper of the year, would have to rate as one of the most respected keepers in the league, and has become known for pulling out the big stops in the big matches.

The Eagles have already shown that they are legitimate title contenders, but if there is one weakness of the Eagles it has been their inconsistency against the top sides on the road.

Coach Tam Finlayson is sure to see this match as a perfect opportunity to dispel any thoughts that his side struggle away from home.

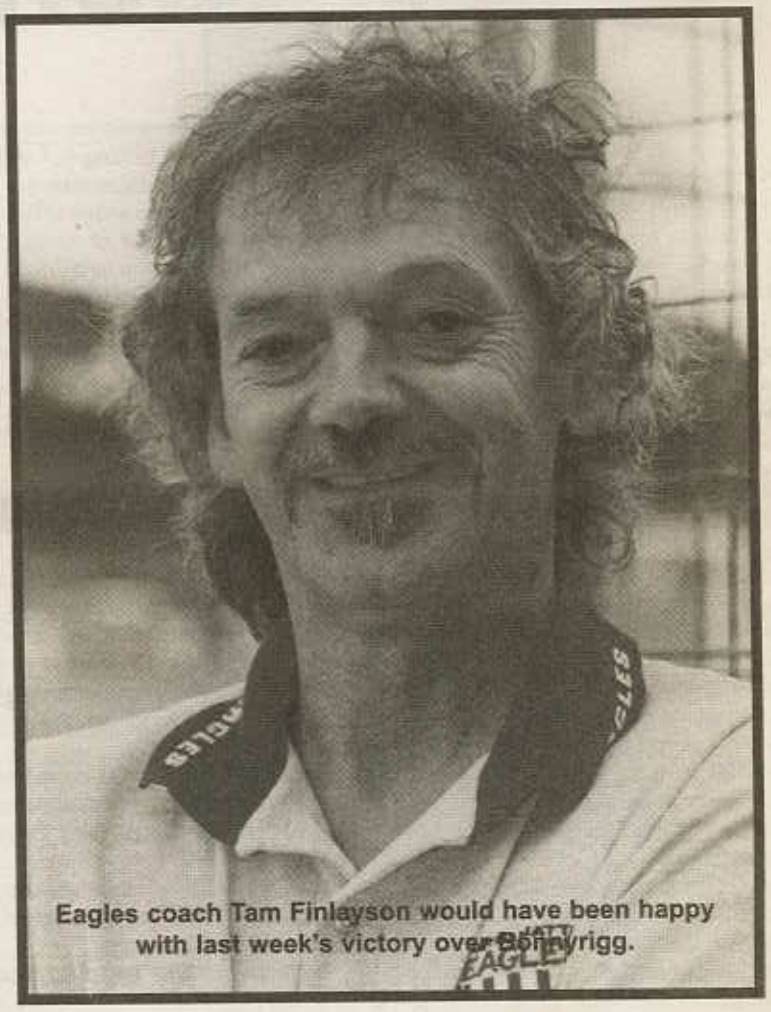
With the battle for leading goalscorer still wide open, look for Jim Bakis and Anthony Mondello try to get a few up on rival Goce Trposki.

It has all the makings of an entertaining match, with the strong and hard-working midfield of the Eagles going up against the skill and finesse of the Lions.

A win here by the Lions in what is sure to be a packed house, would see them firm for a finals berth, while the Eagles will be hoping that the White-Eagles slip up against the Bulls so that they can be the only other club to sit atop of the ladder this season.

Bankstown Lions:
1. Zlatko Josevski, 2. Sefer Yildiz, 3. Richard Luksic, 4. Bryan Raeburn, 5. Anthony Kanaan, 6. Paul Wearne, 7. George Issa, 8. Robert Issa, 9. Goce Trposki, 10. Iain MacDonald, 11. Alex Trpkoski, 12. Adam Mammoliti, 13. Saso Boskovski, 14. Freddy Umlil, 15. Damien Luksic, 16. Colin Luff, 17. Steven Dimitrievski, 18. Dong-Ki Kim, 19. Robert Angievski, 20. Cem Akilli, 21. Darren Iocca, 22. Leo Carle,
Coach: Ljube Jancev
Players to watch: Colin Luff, Freddy Umlil

Parramatta Eagles:
1. Jason Holmes, 2. Daniel Borg, 3. Geoff Dwyer, 4. Malcolm Meilak, 5. Mark Reveley, 6. Mirko Jurilj, 7. Mauricio Islas, 8. Daniel Kukucka, 9. Anthony Mondello, 10. Tony Mittiga, 1 1. Jim Bakis, 13. Paul O'Grady, 12. Glenn Sprod, 14. Stephen Chipps, 15. Ben Delicata, 16. Geoff Howarth, 19. Danial Cummins, 21. Joel Morgan, **Coach:** Tam Finlayson
Players to watch: Daniel Cummins, Glen Sprod


Eagles coach Tam Finlayson would have been happy with last week's victory over Bonnyrigg.

X-Factor: The wet weather, could well take away from an attacking spectacle and will come down to which team wants to get down and dirty.

Prediction: Lions by one

In other games this week Canterbury Marrickville will be looking to continue on their good form when they host the Panthers. Yet to lose under new coach Laki Konistis, the Berries are still on track to make a run for the finals.

The Tigers look set to continue the misery for the Saints when they travel to St.George stadium. The three points will be welcomed by Les de Celis as the side has only managed two points in their last three games.

Bonnyrigg form hasn't been much better and face the improving Fairfield Bulls at the Serbian Centre on Saturday. The Bulls are almost back to full strength and will certainly pose a tough challenge for the White-Eagles.

Blacktown host Belconnen in a must-win match for the Demons who have had two weeks to freshen up after last week's postponed match against the Coasties.

The Coasties are at home again this week and will be hoping that the weather improves if they want to host the Sharks this week.

Former NSL star Sprod quietly confident Parramatta Eagles can go all the way

By Adam Leto

PARRAMATTA Eagles closed the gap on the Bonnyrigg White Eagles at the top of the NSW Premier League table with a nail-biting 1-0 victory at Melita Stadium last Sunday night.

In a torid arm-wrestle both sides shelved their usual attacking brand of football prefering to roll up their sleeves and tough it out.

The entertainment was still there but this game definitely had a finals feel about it.

It was also a redemption of some sorts for the Eagles who have had to play second fiddle to the Eagles all season.

This proved that the competition is far from being a one-horse race.

New Eagles recruit and former Newcastle Breakers Captain Glen Sprod told Soccer Today that the win was extremely important.

"Well it's certainly brought them back to the field a bit," Sprod said.

"If they had won they would've gone seven points clear at the top, as it stands now we're only one point behind.

"It was a pretty even match and both sides didn't really create too many clear chances.

"Both sides gave it their all, and with about 10 minutes left they really threw everything at us but our keeper Jason Holmes did a terrific job and pulled of some outstanding saves.

"Overall though it was a close match but I think we deserved the win, and it's a bit of a turn-around from the hiding they gave us in the first round."

No doubt confidence is high in the Eagles camp, and with their squad nearing full strength the Parramatta side will be looking to continue their winning run.

"We've still got some improving to do," admits Sprod.

"Everything is starting to fall into place nicely, and we're just looking at picking up as many points as we can.

"We're quietly confident, but not over-confident because when that happens that's when complacency can creep in and things start going against you."

And Sprod knows all about it, with the experienced midfielder having nearly 200 NSL caps to his name.

Combined with the experience of players such as Mirko Jurilj and Mark Reveley, and the youthful exuberance of Anthony Mondello and Ben Delicata the Eagles have all the right ingredients for success.

"We've got to keep our feet on the ground though," Sprod said.

"We've got a tough match against Bankstown this week and after their strong performance last week they'll be tough.

"Bonnyrigg are still the team to beat, but now that we've beaten them other sides will be wanting to pick us off also."

With competition for places in the Eagles line-up intense, Sprod is aware that nobody is guaranteed a place in the starting XI.

He admits that he has taken some time to get adjusted to the side, but is looking forward to keeping up the hard work and maintaining his spot.

"The competition for a place in the side is good, and it brings out the best in everyone," he says.

"It shows which players have got the heart to want to make it and the others that don't have it and if they don't then they're no good.

"We're certainly giving (coach) Tam (Finlayson) and (assistant coach) John (Calleja) a few headaches when it comes to picking the side.

"I've really enjoyed this season, and there is a lot less pressure then playing in the NSL.. I've been happy with my own form and with the way things are going but we have to continue to keep working hard and keep focused."

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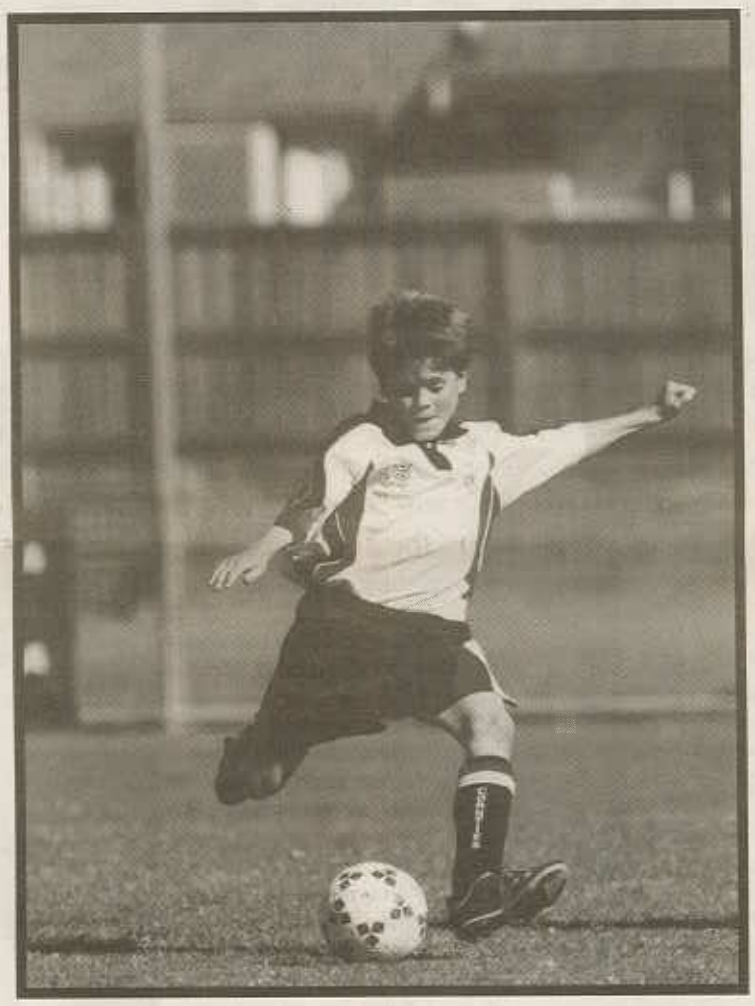
Registration days for the kids are taking place soon



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THE FINAL WHISTLE

Everyone's entitled to their two cents worth but personal abuse just isn't on ...

It's amazing the lengths people will go to get their point across.

After running Sharkette twins Kristy and Melissa on the cover of Issue 2 of Soccer Today, we've had a huge response.

Many people have congratulated us on daring to be different while others have slagged it off as being a disgrace.

However, of several letters and emails that we have received, plus a few phone calls, more readers have offered positive feedback than negative.

It's not surprising that the biggest positives came from young males while some of the diehards were not convinced that cheerleaders had any business being in a soccer publication, especially the front cover.

Even some women considered it an affront - especially those who play the game - and the term "Bimbo" was used on a number of occasions by both genders to describe the girls.

But most of those critics wouldn't have even half the intelligence of the girls concerned.

It is an amazing human trait that people will immediately judge a person by the way he or she looks or by what he or she does for a living.

If a girl looks great and she is a cheerleader, must she be a bimbo?

If a girl plays soccer - and the women's game is the fastest growing sport in Australia - then some people, and I'm sure to get an angry response for printing this, immediately occupy the mindset that the women's game is full of lesbians.

There are even still people involved in the more robust football codes who consider soccer a sissy's game, one for girls.

So where does it end?

OK, I understand that everyone's entitled to their opinion, but it gets a bit nasty when certain so-called readers charge into an office manned by a female member of staff and start dishing out abuse.

One lunatic barged into the office last week and started abusing one of our members of staff because we ran the cheerleaders on the cover.

He justified his actions via the "I'm a coach and therefore I know a bit about the game" crap and then proceeded to threaten to tell his buddies to boycott the magazine.

Cool as a cucumber, our lady told him he had a choice to do what he wanted with his money and that if he felt so strongly about the issue, then maybe he should just stop buying the magazine.

His response went along the lines of: "well, I don't think that's a good attitude," laughable considering this tosser had just verbally abused a woman trying to do her job.

His actions must make him feel like a REAL man but deep down he's someone who you wouldn't trust to coach your kids. If he can abuse a woman in an office environment in which he's unwelcome then who knows what else he's capable of doing?

It's been quite a week.

But hey, publishing a soccer mag wasn't meant to be easy.

Until next week,

Yours in the world game,

Derek Royal (Publisher)

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THE WOMEN'S GAME

Proudly brought to you by SOCCER TODAY

Singing the National Anthem in front of a boisterous football crowd isn't a task for the faint-hearted. So imagine when Olympic Sharkette Rebecca learnt that she was doing just that only days before the event.
Words: Derek Royal; Pictures: Tina Asprea

REBECCA was feeling nervous. She'd been spooked and didn't quite know what to do.

How am I going to get out of this one? she pondered. Rebecca had been asked to perform the National Anthem at the Sharks' home stoush with Northern Spirit. She agreed but as the day of reckoning drew nearer, she had a panic attack.

"Wendy, I can't do it," she wrote in a text message to the Sharkettes' head cheerleader. "There's just no way."

Wendy, who had made the initial request to Beck, felt dumbstruck and thought: "what are we to do now?"

So she took on the mantra of the boss lady: "Beck, you've got to do it, we're relying on you."

Rebecca tried to squirm out of it but when she discovered that she wasn't singing alone, she relented. "OK, Wendy, I'll do it," she said.

Phew, the show was still on the road but Beck and fellow singer Michelle would only have a day to rehearse.

Just one day.

The funny thing about this duo is the fact that Rebecca is the tallest of the Sharks' dance troup, while Michelle is one of the more diminutive.

But together they sang one of the best renditions of Advance Australia Fair that this humble journo has heard for some time.

So how did it feel to be singing in front of all those people, Beck?

"I wasn't as scared as I thought I would be," Beck told *Soccer Today*.

"When I sing my voice sometimes goes a little shaky but tonight I think it wasn't as shaky as normal.

"I'm really happy."

And what went through her mind when she stood there in front of the masses?

"It was weird, I was just thinking about the song, the words and nothing else.

"I closed my eyes so I could concentrate more, I was in my own little space."

Rebecca, 18, is yet another talented lass who happens to dance for the Olympic Sharkettes.

A year ago she and her cousin Chanelle decided to wander along to a Sharkettes audition and lo-and-behold, they BOTH made the cut.

"I used to watch the Cronulla League team with my dad and whenever I saw the cheerleaders performing I always dreamed of being just like them," Beck said.

"When I auditioned for the squad I remember one of the Mermaids encouraging me and giving me a real confidence boost.

"Hopefully I can do the same for some of the younger and new girls coming through."

But while Rebecca had a few butterflies in her stomach on match day, it's not as if she's a novice at this sort of thing.

Last year, she auditioned for television show Pop Stars and out of thousands of entries made it to the final 20.

"I had no idea what it was all about and I had no idea what I was getting myself in for but I thought of it as an experience," she said.

"It was really hard. They didn't take anyone until they got up to my group and I had to sing a little bit of my song and they said yep you can come back the next day.

"I was so excited I was jumping over everyone.

"It was full on and anyway the next day I had to come back and we danced, every hour they cut people back and I got down to the final 20 in NSW and the next cut was the final 10, which I missed out on.

"But I had no idea that I would even get to the top 20. It was just a good experience and hopefully I can achieve something out of it.

"It was one of my first auditions for anything and to get as far as I did I was just so excited and over the moon, it was such a big thing."

Yep, a big thing. Just like singing like the National Anthem and performing for the dance squad renowned as the best of its kind in the land.

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